

Liberty Union makes third round of budget cuts

By Rowena Coetsee
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BRENTWOOD — Far East County's high school district has made another round of cuts to next year's budget.

Liberty Union trustees recently voted to slash \$1.12 million more from the district's proposed 2010-11 spending plan, bringing the total reductions to just over \$4 million.

That cumulative figure represents 8.2 percent of the general fund, which is the one from which the district is making all its cuts.

It's also the most the district ever has cut in a single year.

Liberty Union reduced expenses by \$3.6 million in 2008-09 and \$3.2 million this year, according to district Business Manager Rick Miller.

Among the casualties in this third round of cuts were class sections and counselors; a part-time campus security guard; and money for larger maintenance projects such as plumbing, re-roofing and replacing carpets.

The district's five comprehensive and alternative schools also lost more of the money they receive each year to spend however they want.

For Liberty, Heritage and Freedom high schools, that means a loss of \$197,000, a 23 percent drop from this year's allocation.

As a result of the cuts, classified employees will be furloughed for three days, as will psychologists and every administrator from vice principals to the superintendent.

The district also will eliminate the equivalent of two full-time teachers. That doesn't necessarily mean more individuals will lose their jobs because the loss of

hours might be spread among instructors in different subject areas, but it's certain that there will be fewer class sections overall, Miller said.

Guidance counselors took a hit as well: Trustees eliminated the equivalent of 2½ of these mentors. Freedom High School will lose half a position; Liberty and Heritage each will part with one, which leaves those sites with two counselors each and Freedom with two full-time ones and a third part-time person.

Heads of departments other than those for core academic subjects, special education and some performing arts no longer will have those extra administrative duties and the stipends that come with them.

In addition, Liberty Union will spend the \$186,000 that's left from the one-time federal economic stimulus funds it received last year, money the district has used to buy textbooks and cover the

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salaries of some employees who otherwise would have lost their jobs, Miller said.

And Liberty High will share one of Heritage High's assistant principals because the district isn't immediately replacing the person who retired, he added.

What's more, adult education is taking a \$50,000 hit, bringing that program's total losses to \$125,000.

Liberty Union's proposed budget, which any member of the public can ask to inspect, is scheduled for adoption at the school board's Wednesday meeting following a public hearing.

Contact Rowena Coetsee at 925-779-7141.

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